

triangular shaped markings along their backs (Fig. 1A). The larvae continued to eat and grow, moving through a number of growth stages. On May 1, 1980 the largest of the caterpillars migrated to the floor of the container, where after spinning a few threads of silk, it pupated (Fig. 1B). The pupa is chestnut-brown in colour, shiny in appearance and about 2 cm long. By May 10 the remaining larvae had pupated. On May 19, 1980 the first adult moth emerged and by May 21 all moths had emerged. The moths have a wing span of about 4 cm. Their forewings are greyish-brown, patterned with whitish bands and streaks and there are blue-grey areas near the tip and base. The hind wings are pearly white with a thin brown line just inside the hind margin (Fig. 1C). A specimen of this moth was also forwarded to Dr Common who identified it as the Cluster Caterpillar (*Spodoptera litura* (Fabricius), family Noctuidae), a wide ranging species which is a serious insect pest of pasture, ornamental and native plants.

Voucher material of *Chenopodium macrospermum* (Kenneally 7189) has been lodged in the W.A. Herbarium and specimens of *Hymenia recurvalis* and *Spodoptera litura* with the National Insect Collection, Canberra.

I am grateful to Mr. Paul G. Wilson (Western Australian Herbarium) for identifying *Chenopodium macrospermum* and Dr I.F.B. Common (CSIRO) for his identifications and information on the moth specimens.

— K.F. KENNEALLY, Western Australian Herbarium.

A Red-back Spider attacking an Immature Dugite. — On February 22, 1980, at about 1015 hrs, a small snake was found entangled in the web of a Red-back Spider *Latrodectus mactans* beside a covered passageway at the CSIRO laboratory at Helena Valley (Fig. 1).

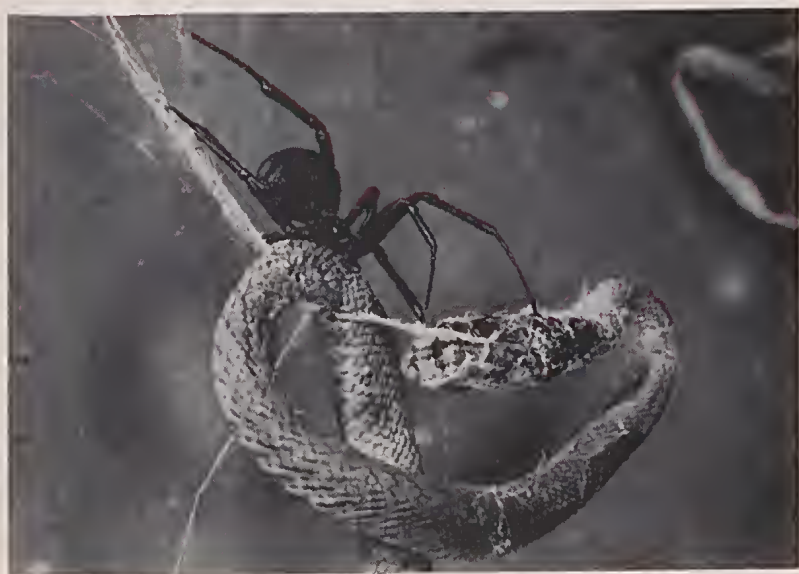


Fig. 1 — Dugite emeshed in the web of a Red-back Spider. Photo: A.G. Wells.

The snake was approximately 20 cm long with scars on the dorsal area which appeared to be the result of injuries received some time previously. It was identified as an immature Dugite *Pseudonaja affinis* on the basis of the divided anal and subcaudal scales.



Fig. 2 — Red-back Spider attacking the underside of the Dugite's neck. Photo: A.G. Wells.

The snake's head was enmeshed in the web and the spider initially made efforts to draw the snake upward after spinning more web around the neck and head of the reptile. This activity was interspersed with repeated attacks to the underside of the neck, the spider withdrawing whenever the snake resumed its struggles. Small beads of blood could be seen on the skin between the scales under the snake's neck (Fig. 2).

By 1130 hrs the attacks had become less frequent, the snake struggling less violently and remaining immobile for 4 to 6 minutes at a time.

Hourly observations showed no change in the situation. At 1740 hrs, when the last observation was made, the snake was reacting feebly to a renewed attack by the spider.

The snake was subsequently removed from the web and kept under observation for 3 days. It was active and aggressive and was finally released in a bushland area.

The photographs by Bert Wells are gratefully acknowledged.

— P. DE REBEIRA